

Preparations for the Sacrifice

posts, had been driven in the ground about three feet apart. ¹²⁷ Standing between them, their arms had been drawn up as far as they could reach, the right hand tied to the stake on the right side and the left hand to the stake opposite. Their feet, likewise, were tied to the posts near the ground. Martin and Stewart were thus strung up side by side. Directly in front of them, and within ten feet, was Aikens, in the same situation. A short time sufficed to divest me of my scanty Indian apparel and place me by the side of the latter, and in like condition. Thus we stood, or rather hung. Aikens and myself facing Stewart and Martin, all awaiting in tormenting suspense to learn what diabolical rite was now to be performed.

The Big Wolf and a number of his old men stationed themselves near us, when the war chief, at the head of the warriors, of whom there were probably two hundred, moved forward slowly, silently, and in single file. Their pace was peculiar and difficult to describe, half walk, half shuffle, a spasmodic, nervous motion, like the artificial motion of figures in a puppet show. Each carried in one hand his knife or tomahawk, in the other a flint stone, three inches ^[411] or more in length and fashioned into the shape of a sharp pointed arrow. The head of the procession as it circled a long way round, first approached Stewart and Martin. As it passed them, two of the youngest warriors broke from the line, seized them by the hair, and scalped them, then resumed their places and moved on. This operation consists of cutting off only a portion of the skin which covers the skull, of the dimensions of a dollar, and does not necessarily destroy life, as is very generally supposed; on the contrary, I have seen men, resident on the borders of Texas, who had been scalped and yet were alive and well. In this instance, the wounds inflicted were by no means mortal; neverthe-

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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His-oo-sán-chees (The Little Spaniard)

From a painting by Catlin

Courtesy Bureau of American Ethnology

[Facing p. 15]

The Comanches

302 Black was the
[822] war paint—the emblem of death—but red, yellow, olive green, and blue were favorite colors. There appears to have been no uniform manner of make-up. One warrior painted his face red, his eyelids white, and streaked his face with black. Another painted one side black and the other yellow down to the waist; another wore red on one side and yellow on the other, with lines of black upon his cheeks.

304 Tattooing was not conspicuous in the Comanche tribe, but both
301 sexes tattooed the face and body, the chest being the most commonly used part of the torso.²⁸ Clinton Smith records that his chief had a black star tattooed on his chest.²⁹ The warriors were as proud of their battle scars as old-time German students were of their dueling wounds, and brought them out more conspicuously by tattooing around them.³⁰ Bears' claws, horse hair, mules' tails, beads, and other similar materials might be appended to the hair or about the body. Bands of rawhide or copper wire served to protect the wrist of the left hand from the slap of the bow string.

Another fancy of the Comanche male was to puncture his ears for rings. "A young man," says Breaks Something, "sees other men have their ears pierced. He comes home and wants to have it done too." This was in late adolescence. The young man asked one of his female relatives to pierce his ears. She took him to the lodge of a woman who had recently had a baby easily, so it would hurt less. There she heated a needle red hot (in the old days she used a cactus spine) and burned six to eight holes all along the helix of one ear. The other was punctured only three or four times. A greased straw was then run through the hole, taken out, regreased, and left in until the wound healed. The boy liked to have all the holes pierced at once, so he could wear all his earrings at once. The old-time earrings were long, thin shells obtained from the Mexicans. A few old men can still be seen who wear circles of brass or silver wire. The many shells were so heavy that the top of the ear bent over under the weight, but the discomfort was borne for the satisfaction it gave. As for the piercing service, it was done for the boy gratis.

291 A Comanche woman clothed herself in buckskin. The luxurious

²⁸ Abbé Emmanuel Domenech, *Seven Years Residence in the Great Deserts of North America*, II, 281; Humfreville, *Twenty Years among Our Hostile Indians*, 184.

²⁹ C. and J. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, 47.

³⁰ Smithwick, *op. cit.*, 178.

The Comanches

276 Comanche pipes were made of bone, stone, or wood by both men and women. Many of the early pipes were straight tubes made of bone from the shank of a deer or an antelope, cut off at either end, the marrow punched out, and the mouth end pared down and smoothed. Before being used, such a pipe was commonly wrapped with the ligament from the back of a buffalo bull's neck, and this, when dried, made so complete a reinforcement of the bone that the pipe might last a long time. The straight bone pipes were easier to carry than the more bulky and elaborate stemmed pipes, and were therefore taken on expeditions. They were both long and short, and were called *o'mo'oy*. Such pipes were also used by the Kiowas and Cheyennes.⁴

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324 According to white captives, the stone pipe was most commonly used in later times. Stone pipes were made of soft stone, either white soapstone or red sandstone. Soapstone is easy to fashion, is found in various sections of the Comanche country, and answers as well as clay or meerschaum. The Comanche stone pipe bowl was made with a vertical cylinder on a flat base that projected forward and back from the bowl. This spur beyond the bowl allowed the smoker to grip the bowl without burning his hands. He had to use a two-handed grip to keep the bowl from falling off the stem, since the two parts of the pipe were not fastened together. Soapstone bowls were usually dyed red or black with a preparation concocted of poke berry and grease or walnut juice. Hard wood was sometimes substituted for stone. Pipes were often artistically engraved and designed, particularly those intended for ceremonial use.

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[462] The manufacturing of weapons and equipment for war and the hunt belonged primarily to the category of man's work. Perhaps the most important article was the bow and arrow. The Comanches made excellent bows, which they used with great skill. A good bow required a long time and much care and labor in construction. The experts were usually the old men who could no longer go to war. [463] According to informants, they had no organization or "guild." The customary present or fee given for an ordinary wooden bow was [435] one horse.⁵

⁴ Informant: Post Oak Jim; see also Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 208.

⁵ Informant: Kills Something.

At Work and Play

The modern bows were approximately three feet in length, most of them made of wood, although there were a few sinew-backed or compound ones made of buffalo, elk, or mountain-sheep horn. The latter were highly finished and required more time to make. They were worth from six to twenty ponies each.⁶ 411
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Not all men made bows in the same way, each workman following the method he thought best. The Comanche country stretched over a wide area, and the best bow materials found in one section might not be available in another. Methods varied with time also. Yet, in general, the process was much the same from the Pecos to the Arkansas and from the Cross Timbers to New Mexico. In making the horn or compound bow, the horns were first thrown into warm water and allowed to remain until they became flexible. They were then straightened and strips of suitable width were cut or sawed. After the strips were filed, shaved, scraped, or rubbed down until the flat sides fitted nicely, the desired length was obtained by overlapping and gluing the ends of from two to four slices. Another piece of horn was then laid on the center at the grasp, where it was glued fast. The whole was then filed or scraped down until it was well proportioned. All the joints were firmly bound with sinew to give resiliency to the bow. Several weeks were required for a skilled workman to make a good, ornamented bow of this type.

Bows were sometimes, though rarely, made of a single piece of horn. A long piece, as nearly straight as possible, was whittled, scraped, and rubbed until it was quite thin. After being made pliable by heating, greasing, and working, it was lashed to a straight stick and left until dry and straight. It was then firmly wrapped with sinew, which was secured in place with glue. Bows of buffalo ribs were sometimes made by the same process. Such bows, however, were of little practical use.

The wooden bow was the common bow of the Comanches. It was made principally from the Osage orange, or *bois d'arc*. Some Indian tribes called the tree "smooth bow"; the Omahas referred to it as yellowwood, but the French gave it the name *bois d'arc*, by which it is best known. It was plentiful along the Arkansas and Canadian rivers and in the eastern fringe of the Comanche country southward 322
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⁶ Garretson, *op. cit.*, 178.

The Comanches

322 into Texas. Bois d'arc is commonly recognized as one of the hardest,
411 finest, and most durable of timbers. If it was not accessible, ash, white
[824] elm, ironwood, mulberry, or hickory were used, hickory being a
highly esteemed bow wood.

When selecting bow wood, the Comanche chose a small upright sapling or a piece of timber with perfectly straight grain from a large tree. The heart of the tree was never used. The timber had to be straight and as free as possible from knots. It had to be seasoned or dried and not allowed to warp in the process. It was generally worked down to approximately the desired size while still green, since green wood worked more easily. Then followed the seasoning process, requiring weeks or months for completion. With fair use a properly made bow would last for many years, but since it might be accidentally broken at any time, timber in various stages of preparation was kept on hand. After the bow wood had seasoned, it was scraped and shaped to proper dimensions and rubbed with fat or brains to make it pliable. Then the stick was put aside, preferably in a warm place, to be worked again in a few days or weeks.⁷ When worked to the proper finish, it was rubbed until it acquired a polish. Glue was spread over the bow, and fresh or wet sinew from the back of a buffalo bull or deer was applied. After the sinew had been wrapped, another coat of glue was applied and smoothed down by thorough rubbing. The bow was then laid aside until perfectly dry. In drying, the fresh sinew would shrink tightly to the wood and, with the glue, made the whole very strong and tough. A common wooden bow could be made in three days, but a week to a month was usually required to finish a fancy one.

411 Glue for bows and arrows was made from chippings from the
381 rawhide of the neck of a buffalo bull, from the shavings cut from a buffalo bull hide in the process of thinning it down, or from horns and hoofs. These were boiled with water to make a strong glue. It was lobbed upon a smoothly whittled stick of mulberry or other wood and allowed to cool. The glue stick was carried in the bow case with the arrows for ready and frequent use. By softening in hot water it was ready as an instant mender for almost anything.

⁷ This method is still used in East Texas for making handles for hammers, axes, shovels, and the like.

At Work and Play

Making an excellent bow string was a task for a specialist. The bow string was made of the sinew of the buffalo bull or deer, derived from the tendon which lies along either side of the spine from the shoulder blades to the hip bones. The tendon was shredded or subdivided longitudinally into fine threads of fiber. It has been estimated that each sinew had then ten times the strength of ordinary cotton thread of equal size. These sinews or threads were next soaked in glue water, and, while damp, several were twisted to form a strong, perfectly round cord of the same size and tension from end to end, and the ends knotted. Post Oak Jim said that he preferred bow strings made of horse-tail hair because "they didn't break and were not spoiled by moisture." Still, he thought bear gut was the best material of all.⁸ 411 ● 283

Arrows, next to the bow, were the most precious possessions of a Comanche. Much time was devoted to searching for arrows that had been shot. They were too hard to obtain and cost too much effort to be wasted. This was also true of points lost from the arrow shafts. Nevertheless, it is asserted on good authority that Comanches would never retrieve an arrow which had taken a human life, enemy or friend.⁹ Great skill, patience, and judgment were required to make a perfect arrow. The old men who made the best arrows were highly respected for their special skill. Although there was a great difference in arrows, the proportions between the shaft, head, and feathers were quite definite. If these proportions were maintained, the arrow performed efficient and effective work in the hands of an expert bowman; otherwise, it was a failure. An arrow too light in the shaft would not fly steadily; one too heavy would not carry its force long enough. When a good, well-balanced arrow struck the mark, the feather end tilted upward. "The Cheyennes, Pawnees, and Pueblos don't know 411 [784]

⁸ This description of bow-making is compiled from statements by informants Kills Something and Post Oak Jim; also, R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 348-49; Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 295-96; Fannie M. Hughes, *Legends of Texas Rivers*, 219; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160; Anon., "Indian Bow and Arrow," *Frontier Times*, Vol. VIII (December, 1930), 141; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 94; Gregg, *op. cit.*, 412; Wissler, *North American Indians of the Plains*, 25-27; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 174; Garretson, *op. cit.*, 178-79; Babb, *op. cit.*, 134; also, oral communication of others to Wallace.

⁹ Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 46.

The Comanches

- 411 how to make arrows" is the opinion of Post Oak Jim. "Comanches and Wichitas make good ones."

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322 Wood for the arrow shafts was selected and handled with the same care and patience as for the bow. Any hard, tough, straight-grained wood was used. Young shoots of the dogwood were preferred because of their straightness and freedom from knots. The second choice, but not nearly so good as dogwood, was mature ash. The young ash sapling was too pithy and soft. When neither of these was available, wild cherry, hackberry, or mulberry was used, although the hackberry required much straightening. Shafts were cut the desired length and roughly shaped, then tied in a bunch and hung near the fire place or in a dry spot to season.

When the arrow shafts had seasoned, a process which required ten days to two weeks if they were kept near a fire but much longer otherwise, they were examined by the arrow-maker for crooked places. Shafts not perfectly straight were made so. Crooked spots were greased and warmed so that the grease would penetrate readily, then quickly straightened with the hands or an implement devised for that purpose. The arrow straightener was made by drilling a hole slightly larger than that of the shaft in a buffalo bone or horn. The arrow was passed back and forth through the hole and bent until perfectly straight. Some men placed their arrows between their teeth to bend them into shape. Next, the shaft was scraped to proper size and taper, and made perfectly round. This was sometimes done by means of two grooved sandstone slabs with flat meeting faces. The arrow was placed in one groove, the other groove fitted over it. Then, holding the two stones together with one hand, the worker pulled the shaft back and forth. Most of the better arrows were grooved from the end of the feathers to the head of the arrow point. The Lipans had four straight grooves, but the Comanches usually made two straight black grooves on one side and two red spiral ones on the other. These grooves were cut with bone containing a circular hole into which extended a little projection from the margin of the hole, or with a flint with a semicircular notch and a projection. The shaft was then polished by rubbing and sometimes decorated with paintings or markings.¹⁰

¹⁰ This description of Comanche arrow-making is compiled from statements by

At Work and Play

There has been much speculation about the meaning of the grooves. The most popular theory is that they permitted the blood of the victim to escape so as to weaken him. Another explanation is that the grooves symbolized lightning, which the Indians believed would make the arrows more surely fatal. It seems more probable that they were to prevent the shaft from warping. 411 ●

The flight and accuracy of an arrow depended to a great extent upon the feathers. If the feathers were good and properly arranged, the arrow carried well. Those of the wild turkey seem to have been the most popular, but, when they were not obtainable, owl or buzzard feathers were used. Neither was affected by blood. Feathers of hawks and eagles were not desirable, since they were injured when wet with blood. Each arrow-maker had his own technique of winging the arrows. When the Cheyennes first began to wing their arrows, they used two feathers, but later changed to three. Some tribes used four. The Comanches used both the two- and three-feather winging technique. Some of the best-informed Comanches regard the two-feathered arrow as unsatisfactory, since it will not follow a straight line to the target. The feathers were taken from the wings, the stems split, the tip of the split stems dipped in glue, and the feathers bound in the grooves on either side of the shaft with a thread of sinew.¹¹ 411 287

In the distal end of the arrow shaft a notch was cut, or a cleft made, in which the arrowhead was set. Colonel Dodge believed that the Comanches placed the blade of the hunting arrow in the same plane with the notch for the string so that it would be more likely to pass between the ribs of the animal, which are up and down. For the same reason, the blade of the war arrow was at right angles to the notch, since the ribs of the human enemy were horizontal.¹² The head 411

informants Medicine Woman and Kills Something; also, Anon., "Indian Bow and Arrow," *loc. cit.*, 141-42; Garretson, *op. cit.*, 179; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160; R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 349; Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 295-96; Domenech, *Seven Years Residence in the Great Deserts of North America*, II, 270; Baylor, "Recollections of the Comanche Indians," *loc. cit.*, 374; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 178-81; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 94. [322]

¹¹ Informant: Kills Something; also, Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 295-96; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 94; Domenech, *Seven Years Residence in the Great Deserts of North America*, II, 270; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160.

¹² R. I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians*, 418-19.

The Comanches

- 411 was held in place with glue and firmly wrapped with wet sinew, which in turn was glued and rubbed to a smooth finish.

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325 The Comanches relied almost entirely on metal for arrow points after they came in contact with the whites. Barrel hoops, bindings for boxes, even frying pans and similar pieces of metal furnished excellent material. The piece of metal was sharpened on one end and on both sides. After the point was sharpened, it was hardened by heating it in a fire and then dropping it while red hot into cold water. The Mexican traders not only supplied iron for the points but files with which to fashion and sharpen the arrowheads. Metal arrowheads became an important item of trade among most American Indian tribes.

Hundreds of thousands were manufactured yearly by eastern traders to be exchanged for furs. They were put in packages of one dozen each, cost the trader six cents a package and were the means for obtaining enormous profits. Usually one package was exchanged for a buffalo robe.¹⁸

There were two general types of metal arrowheads, one for game and one for war. The game point had no barb and was easily extracted, while the war point was barbed and loosely attached to the shaft. Some war points had but one barb, which, when shot into a body and the shaft pulled, caught in the flesh, and the point turned cross-wise in the wound, making it impossible to extract it without tearing or cutting.

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324 Before the acquisition of metal, arrows were made of stone, bone, or horn. Flint appears to have been the most popular, and some preferred it even after the introduction of metal. It has been claimed that wounds made by flint arrow points were more likely to be fatal than those of metal. The Comanches apparently did little grinding or polishing of flint. Indeed, the nature of much of the flint of the Comanche country rendered such treatment unnecessary. Lehmann has left an account of one method of making stone arrowheads, but whether it was Apache or Comanche is uncertain, the implication being that the method was common among both tribes.

¹⁸ Garretson, *op. cit.*, 180.

At Work and Play

We threw a large flint stone, from two to six feet in circumference, into the fire. After the stone became very hot, small thin pieces would pop off; we selected those pieces which would require the least work to put into shape, and picked these pieces up with a stick split at the end; while these pieces were very hot, we dropped cold water on those places we wished to thin down; the cold water caused the spot touched to chip off, and in this way we made some of the keenest pointed and sharpest arrows that could be fashioned out of stone.¹⁴

All efforts of archaeologists to determine a Comanche-type flint arrow point have been in vain. In this connection Professor Mildred Pickle Mayhall says, "There are several mentions of distinctive points and shafts for different tribes but just what those differences were we do not exactly know. Poisoned arrows may have belonged to all the Texas tribes but there is little definite information about this save in reference to the Comanches."¹⁵ The Comanches did poison their arrow points occasionally for use in war, by making an extract from a plant not known to our informants or by sticking them in a dead skunk.

The bow and arrow was exceptionally accurate up to fifty yards or more. The Comanche arrow shot from a good bow could wing a true flight for three hundred yards. It has been maintained on good authority that at a distance of from ten to fifteen yards, an arrow (twenty to thirty inches in length) could be driven completely through the carcass of a buffalo, providing it struck no bone, that an object the size of a doorknob could be hit by an expert marksman an average of four out of five shots, and that an expert Comanche hunter could kill twice the number of buffalo with bow and arrow as an American with a pistol.¹⁶

The superiority of bow and arrow over the old-type musket was recognized by the Comanches. When muskets first became known to them, they were all eager to obtain them. But when the novelty

¹⁴ Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 93-94.

¹⁵ Mildred P. Mayhall, "The Indians of Texas: the Atakapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas Library), 608-609.

¹⁶ Gregg, *op. cit.*, 361-63, 233; Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 296; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160.

The Comanches

● 4// of the weapon had worn off, they realized that it was inferior to the bow and arrow both in hunting and in war. The muskets had a greater range but a much slower rate of fire, they were difficult to load on horseback, and ammunition could be obtained only infrequently. As a result the Comanches were reverting to the bow and arrow when the introduction of repeating firearms turned the tide again.¹⁷

A buckskin band was worn on the wrist of the left arm to protect it from the bruising twang of the bowstring. The bow and arrows were carried in a skin case by a band over the right shoulder, and in wet weather the string was kept under the armpit to keep it dry. When crossing a wide stream in flood, the Comanche shot his arrows across before swimming his horse over.

The shield, next to the bow and arrow, was the Comanche warrior's most important weapon, and it was valued above all other things. Several days were required to make a shield. There were individual differences in its structure, but the basic pattern was always the same. It was made from the shoulder hide of an old buffalo bull, since that was the toughest portion. The green hide was heated over a fire or steamed over hot water and, while still hot, was rubbed on a rough rock in order to flesh it. Scrapers were used to finish the fleshing. Heating and steaming contracted and thickened the hide, and this process was repeated as many times as necessary in order to make the hide as thick as possible. A smooth stone was then used to rub and pound the hide to efface all wrinkles and make it smooth and pliable. One or more layers of circular pieces cut from it were then stretched flesh side out over each side of a circular wooden hoop, two feet or more in diameter, and sewed together around the edge of the hoop with rawhide thongs passed through eyelets punched around the edges of the layers of hide. The space between the layers, usually about one inch thick, was packed with feathers, hair, or paper to stop the force of arrows, bullets, or blows from other weapons. Charles Goodnight relates that one shield which he captured from a Comanche warrior contained a complete history of Rome.¹⁸ Before discover-

¹⁷ Ralph Linton, "Acculturation and Process of Culture Change," in Ralph Linton (ed.), *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, 474.

¹⁸ J. E. Haley, "Charles Goodnight's Indian Recollections," *Plains-Panhandle Historical Review*, Vol. I (1928), 20.

At Work and Play

ing that paper was used for padding inside the shields, Anglo-American pioneers were quite puzzled at the Comanche interest in books. 411 ●

The surface of the shield was stretched into a convex or saucer shape with the convex surface to the outside. A convex surface would readily deflect a blow. The shield was then hung up to dry. Sometimes the shield-maker would unlace the shield and remove the wooden frame, adding, of course, additional packing. This increased the safety of the shield, since a bullet could penetrate the wooden frame more easily than the packing.

A buckskin cover was usually fitted over the flint-like shield, much as a cover is drawn over a spare automobile tire. It was drawn in on the under side by means of a buckskin thong laced through eyelet holes around the edges. Through the hide itself were bored two pairs of holes, and through each pair was passed a loop or band of rawhide or buckskin. By means of these two bands the shield was fastened to the left arm near the elbow in such a manner as not to interfere with the free use of the hand.

After the shield had thoroughly dried and cured, it was treated by setting it up as a target, and if a bullet or an arrow pierced it when fired from a distance of about fifty yards, it found a place in the debris of the camp. In times of action the Indian manipulated his arm so as to make any blow strike the shield at an angle. Very few bullets fired from old-fashioned rifles would penetrate a well-constructed shield unless the bullet struck the surface perpendicularly, a near impossibility when the shield was in the hands of one expert in the art of using it.

The Anglo-American pioneers and soldiers who knew the Comanches well relate that their shields were usually adorned with three kinds of insignia. Bear teeth worn or painted on a shield indicated that the owner was a great hunter or had the toughness of the bear; scalps attached to or painted on the shield indicated its owner to be a mighty warrior, and horse or mule tails that he was an accomplished raider. The materials were attached by means of buckskin strings to the under side of the shield. Around the rim of the outside cover feathers were attached and held in place with sinew. Comanche informants maintained that there should have been an even number, usually four but possibly six or more. The arrangement made it pos- 411 531 [801]

The Comanches

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531 sible for the ruffle of feathers to be kept in constant motion when the shield was shaken, thus serving to bewilder the eye and disturb the aim of the enemy. Hair was sometimes substituted for the feather fringe. A plain cover without decoration protected feathers and paintings when the shield was not in use.¹⁹

Some Comanche shields were painted with simple geometric decorations. On at least one specimen which has survived the heavy lines are painted red and the narrow ones green. The great majority of shields, however, were unpainted and made without ceremony. There is not sufficient evidence either to substantiate or to disprove Professor Lowie's contention that each semi-military society had its shield which served as an insignia, symbolical of its rank and position.

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778 Originally carried in order to ward off missiles and spear thrusts, the shield in later times rendered a protection that was not only physical but also spiritual. Indeed, according to Comanche informants, some shields possessed mystical power and were "sort of sacred." There were several ways by which a warrior might obtain such a shield. It might be a gift from an older friend or a relative, although the owner must be very careful to whom he gave his shield. Furthermore, some shields had such strong power that they could not be given away; they had to be thrown in a running stream to wash away the power. Such shields were ringed with tabus. They were rarely uncovered except in actual battle. They could never be brought within a tipi. Most of them had to be stored at least half a mile away from the camp. If this seems a foolish place to keep a shield in the event of a surprise attack, it should be realized that for a menstruating woman to come near it or for a person with greasy hands to touch it would completely destroy its power and insure the wounding of its owner. To get his shield prior to a raid, a warrior made a half-circle to the spot where it hung; he moved the shield in a circle and then returned to the camp from the opposite direction, completing a whole circle with his route.

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¹⁹ This account of the construction and the utility of the shield is from statements by informants Medicine Woman and Wiley Yellowfish; also, Haley, "Charles Goodnight's Indian Recollections," *loc. cit.*, 20; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160-61; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 25-26; Baylor, "Recollections of the Comanche Indians," *loc. cit.*, 374; Babb., *op. cit.*, 40-42; Parker, *op. cit.*, 195; Burnet, "American Aborigines, Indians of Texas," *loc. cit.*, Vol. I (June 5, 1824), 177.

At Work and Play

The father of Rhoda Greyfoot, who was a famous medicine man, had a shield, but Rhoda never saw it. "They were very precious about them," she said. 411
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Painted shields usually had power, and the designs symbolized that power. If a young man wanted a new shield endowed with power and was willing to encumber himself with all the burdens and limitations that power imposed, he had three choices for obtaining it. He could ask a man who had a medicine shield for a share of his power, he could go on a vision quest himself to get instructions for the design from a spirit source, or he could ask a medicine man to procure a design for him.

In the first case, the young man would visit the owner of a medicine shield and smoke with him. Not until the pipe had been smoked would he make his request, for, having smoked with him, the shield owner must grant the favor he asked. The donor gave him some power, but he still retained his own power, too. The young man then had his shield painted by the donor as an exact duplicate of his own. If, however, the young man received instructions for the design from a spirit source, he would ask a "good artist" to paint his shield according to the vision. As for the third possibility—asking a medicine man to procure a design for him—Post Oak Jim gave the following account:

« « « A boy brought his shield to a peyote meeting and asked the leader for advice. He smoked and asked assistance. He was told to leave the shield by the door at the side of the fire tender. 411
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After the midnight water ceremony the leader took the shield, put cedar on the fire, held the shield over it, and shook it. He gave it to the boy, who was sitting on the south side. He took the shield and made a circle. The leader said he would have directions for him in the morning, and the boy thanked him. [The leader can give directions at a meeting or afterwards.]

In the morning he told the boy to bring an artist and he would dictate the design to him. "The design will be all right," he said, "so don't be afraid. If you want to know about it, go to a lonely place some night, and the shield will tell you all about it."²⁰ » » »

²⁰ Informant: Post Oak Jim.

The Comanches

- 411 778 A shield with power not only gave its owner the general protective influence due to its sacred character, but also endowed him with those qualities attributed to heavenly bodies, birds, mammals, and other living creatures from whom the design-giving vision came. It also might afford protection from the elements, for some shields were sacred to thunder and lightning.

- 411 The lance was another favorite weapon of certain Comanches. The use of the war lance has been associated with the horse, but it is evident that the tribes who came to occupy the plains in historic times were acquainted with the stone-headed lance as a hunting implement before they entered the plains. Two types of lances were used by the Comanches. One was a hooked lance, so called because the shaft was bent somewhat in the shape of the conventional shepherd's crook. The other was the ordinary lance, six to seven feet in length. It had a wooden shaft of bois d'arc armed in modern times with an iron or steel point in any shape which was convenient and easily made from the material at hand. Some lance heads were as much as thirty inches long by one inch wide, tapering to a point at the end away from the shaft. Previous to the acquisition of metal, the lance head was of chipped stone, often leaf-shaped. In either case, the head was bound to the shaft with sinew of rawhide thongs and glue in much the same way that the arrow point was bound to the shaft. The shafts of old-time spears were decorated only by a feather or a bunch of feathers attached near the butt end. Beaded shafts like the one on Quanah Parker's spear were a late fashion. Sheaths, which might or might not be decorated, were sometimes made for lances.

- 411 554 The battle spear was not a weapon for any ordinary man to carry. It was never hurled javelin-wise but was always thrust from under the arm. If thrust overarm, it might hit a bone and break the point or frighten the rider's horse, according to Breaks Something. Only a brave man carried a spear, because it meant hand-to-hand combat. More than this, a spear carrier could never retreat and live to face his fellow warriors. There was no alternative for him but victory or death. In Breaks Something's opinion, the war lance ranked higher as a symbol of a war chief than any headdress, and warriors who carried the spear went without a war bonnet. His own brother, after the Battle of Adobe Walls, gave up his spear, and all his family was glad.

At Work and Play

"A spear is a big responsibility." A warrior returning from a successful raiding party set his lance upright before the door of his lodge with the scalps of his victims dangling from it. No one except the owner could remove the trophies.²¹ As in the case of the shield, tradition records that some lances had power, and the lance carried by the leaders was a characteristic sign of office. 411 ●
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The Talley Sheet of Governor Anza reveals five Comanche groups, the leader of each having a lance which represented the rank of his group.²² Robert H. Lowie asserts that the major difference in the several societies lay in the dances prior to assembling a war party and that each society had a lance and shield symbolical of a very definite position.²³ There is a possibility that straight lances may have been carried by one rank and hooked lances by another, but there seems to be no definite pattern. Both straight and hooked lances were carried with point upward.

Another weapon used by the Comanches was the war club or battle axe, called *wapitapu'ni*. Made of a flint stone weighing about two pounds, it was about six inches long and three inches wide on one end, tapering off to a width of from one to two inches on the other. Each end was thinned to a rough edge. The middle of the flint was grooved or thinned on either side to prevent it from slipping on the handle. The wooden handle was fourteen to sixteen inches in length and from one to one and one-half inches in diameter. One end was split, and into this incision the axe was inserted and fastened to the handle by thongs of green or wet rawhide, wrapped around the flint and handle about half a dozen times. The ends of the rawhide were made fast by means of small wooden pegs passed through the rawhide and into the wooden handle. The rawhide contracted in drying and left the axe handle almost as firmly bound as a modern axe and handle. The battle axe served a number of purposes and at close range was a deadly weapon. 411

Despite their strenuous life, the Comanches found time for recreation and entertainment. Their diversions, like their industries, were 517

²¹ Zoe A. Tilghman, *Quanaq, The Eagle of the Comanches*, 16.

²² Alfred B. Thomas, "An Eighteenth Century Comanche Document," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XXXI (1929), 291-92.

²³ *Ibid.*, 293-95, quoting R. H. Lowie, "Notes on Shoshonean Ethnography," *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers*, XX (1924), 283.

The Comanches

857 spent in gang play. When a new camp was set up, they set out to find a good water hole in the creek where they could play all day. Following and baiting small birds and large insects fascinated them. Hummingbirds were shot with headless arrows having a vertically split foreshaft in which to catch the birds. Boys would spend all day chasing one bird, according to Skinny and Wrinkled, in a kind of concentration that boded well for the future hunter and tracker of men and beasts. Bull bats were shot with arrows having horizontally split foreshafts. Grasshoppers were shot with hummingbird arrows, and their hind legs were eaten for lunch.

411 224 The boys had great fun by tying two grasshoppers together with a short thread and then crowding about to watch them "wrestle." They would jump and jerk each other up short. The one that first fell on its back was the loser. They liked to catch "shit rollers," tie a piece of straw to a leg, and watch them fly, running fleetly after them as they followed their courses. They would stick a small straw up the anus of a horsefly and turn the insect loose—which perhaps showed how they felt about horseflies.

Small boys, who had no real arrows, made them of reed shafts with grasshopper legs for points and a ballast daub of mud stuck two inches from the point. They killed night hawks with slings and amused themselves playing with whirrers—two strings attached to a bone and pulled taut to make a whirring noise.

Although boys were by themselves most of the time, the younger ones now and then joined the little girls to play camp. On the sand by the creek they built small windbreaks and arbors. A play group leader was made "chief," and each boy chose a wife or wives. They all swam in the creek, gathered in ponies with the girls, and rode together. Some time was spent by the boys in hunting squirrels to bring into camp for their "wives" to cook, while the girls gathered berries, edible roots, and the eggs of turkeys, ducks, quail, and prairie chickens. All this swag made for good make-believe feasts.

[836] The more precocious dallied in sexual experimentation. "One day we played at being married. I did my best to make a baby with my wife," said Post Oak Jim.

857 526 When younger boys and girls played together (but not when they were playing camp), there were several forms of joint games.

The Comanches

778 Practically every Comanche in more or less varying degree possessed one or more of these amulets or charms which he carried or wore. Some were obtained from medicine men; others were discovered through visions. Men very commonly wore one or more such charms tied in the hair or about the neck. Especially did a man turn to his medicine if he had a new project of great importance in view, such as setting forth on the warpath or attempting a trading or hunting expedition into enemy territory. Charms were put on very young children by their mothers for the purpose of ensuring good health and protecting them from evil influences. Crow feathers had an especial protective power for babies; tied to the cradle-board, they kept away evil spirits. Their power was negative. In fact, we never heard of the crow's giving *puha* to a man. It was tabu to use crow feathers as flight feathers on arrows. "You absolutely cannot hit anything with such arrows," said That's It. Adding his contribution, Skinny and Wrinkled, who was interpreting, declared that he always uses the bow and arrow to hunt winter game. He is a Carlyle graduate and prone to test Comanche beliefs. "I have tried using crow-feather guides," he said. "It is no good. It does something to the shooter so he can't hit nothing."

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A stuffed bat on the cradle also watched protectively over the baby. "He's little, but he's really a man."

756 In Comanche society practically all males and many old women came to possess medicine, but only those who possessed at least one outstanding thaumaturgic power were recognized as medicine men or women. The greater one's power, the greater the prestige he achieved. People possessing great power usually had several lesser powers as well, and they were sought after by would-be neophytes. According to Post Oak Jim, who is himself a notable medicine man, "A *puhakas* likes to keep his favorite medicine, which he does not use often. If a young man offers smoke and asks for medicine, he will withhold his favorite and give him another."

This asking for medicine was an interesting aspect of Comanche practice and attitudes. From the Comanche point of view a good citizen should help his fellow tribesmen. Medicine was primarily to bring success in war and the hunt, activities in which the triumphs of each redounded to the benefit of all. Medicine, like a helping hand,

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952

NO6 Comanche NO6

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Voice of the Sunrise (Tabananika), chief of the Yamparika

[Facing p. 335]

Courtesy Bureau of American Ethnology

824 to the informant) and boiled, the brew being used both externally
278 and internally. The stems of a sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)
757 were soaked in water, and the body was bathed with this liquid. As
a cure for colds the bark of the sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) was chewed
and the juice swallowed.

A few miscellaneous remedies remain to be described.⁴ The leaves
of snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) were mixed with some other
substance (unknown to the informant) as a remedy for whooping
cough, and the roots of the nightshade (*Solanum sp.*) were boiled
and the decoction prescribed as a general tonic, particularly in cases
of tuberculosis. An infusion for reducing swellings was made from
the red false mallow (*Malvastrum coccineum*) steeped in water. The
tribes of the Missouri River region employed this plant in a similar
manner (7, p. 103). Their practice was to chew the roots and apply
[752] them to inflamed sores and wounds as a cooling and healing salve.
The mucilaginous properties of the plant probably account for its
use in this way. The roots of the dotted button snakeroot (*Liatris
punctata*) were chewed and the juice swallowed as a cure for swollen
testes. The leaves of the pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) or of the walnut
(*Juglans nigra*), ground and rubbed on the affected part, were thought
efficacious for ringworm.

824 The Comanche used the branches of the Osage orange (*Maclura*
411 *pomifera*) in the manufacture of bows. This was the preferred wood
439 for the making of bows throughout most of the Plains region. Since
the Osage orange occurs in only a limited area, from southern Mis-
souri to northern Texas, its wood became a valuable trade article.
There are accounts telling of the great demand for it among tribes
as far north as the Arikara and the Blackfoot and as far west as the
Pueblos. John D. Hunter, who spent many years as a captive
among the Indians of the Arkansas and Missouri country, says of
the Osage orange (11, p. 173):

[825] ⁴ Two nonvegetal Comanche medicines were also collected. Although these
752 are not pertinent to a discussion of plant uses, they may be recorded briefly.
One is the nest of some nondomestic bee (Comanche: *tipinatsu*), composed of a
gummy substance which gives off a pungent odor when heated. The nest was
placed on the fire; its fumes, inhaled by one who was unconscious, were said
to revive the person quickly. The other medicine is a white chalky mineral,
apparently fossil bones (Comanche: *tsosbil'sitsuni*), which was obtained from
deposits and used in treating sprains and fractures. The Comanche considered
[776] this mineral to be the bones of Piamupits, a supernatural being.

Comanche Uses of Plants

535

They manufacture it into bows, which become articles of commerce, and are sometimes exchanged for peltries, etc. I knew a Sioux to give his horse for a single one; and among the upper tribes they frequently bring three or four beaver skins each. The tree is so highly valued, that they never destroy it, except when wanted for use, or in the territories of their enemies; in the latter case, they make its destruction as particular an object, as they do that of their game.

Since the Comanche were more or less in control of at least a part of the area in which the Osage orange grew they were doubtless in a position to profit through trading it to other tribes. The Tewa tribes of the Rio Grande valley specified the Comanche particularly as a source of their Osage orange bowwood (20, p. 68).

Marcy and McClellan (15, p. 98) describe the bows of the Comanche as being made of the tough and elastic wood of the Osage orange, "strengthened and reinforced with the sinews of the deer wrapped firmly around them." This brief and incomplete description suggests the sinew-backed bow which is classified by Mason (17, p. 638) as the "seized bow" and which had sinew "wrapped about" it, but Mason seems nowhere to describe this bow in detail, has no illustrations of it, and gives no distribution of it among American Indians. The description might also apply to the sinew-lined type of sinew-backed bow except that it does not mention the lining of sinew, often inconspicuous, which was usually bound on by transverse bands of sinew. The "Shoshonean or narrow" type of sinew-lined bow (17, pp. 638, 643, and Plates 61 and 79) may be indicated. This bow had its distribution among the Shoshonean tribes of the Great Basin and among the Apache, the Navajo, and the Pueblos, but, according to Mason, did not occur east of the Rocky Mountains (17, pp. 640, 643). Wissler (25, pp. 159-160), however, examined bows in the American Museum of Natural History from various Plains tribes and noted sinew-lined ones from some of the northern Plains tribes. He considered these intrusive from the sinew-backed bow area to the immediate west, supplementary to the self bow, and of exceptional occurrence. The Comanche bows which Wissler mentioned appear to have been of the simple, unbacked type. It does not seem likely that the Comanche bows mentioned by Marcy and McClellan were such, for Mason nowhere describes or illustrates self bows bound with sinew. Whether or not the bows seen by Marcy and McClellan were sinew-backed, and, if so, whether or not they were typical Comanche bows remain open questions. There is,

- 824 apparently, no doubt that the Comanche were in frequent contact
 ●411 with tribes using the sinew-lined bow, and that the tribes most closely related to the Comanche habitually used such bows.

Arrow shafts were made from straight stems of the rough-leaved dogwood (*Cornus asperifolia*). This species was also the preferred arrow material of the tribes of the Missouri River region (7, p. 108). Marcy and McClellan (15, p. 98) describe the arrows of the Comanche as being "twenty inches long, of flexible wood, with a triangular point of iron at one end, and two feathers intersecting each other at right-angles, at the opposite extremity." They do not specify the material used for arrows further than by saying that it was "flexible wood." Arrows for the *aratsi* game were made from the stems of the soapberry (*Sapindus Drummondii*). Wood for game sticks was obtained from the buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

- 824 The leaves of the smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) were mixed with
 276 tobacco. The addition of other plant materials to tobacco was a common practice among many tribes of Indians, the leaves of smooth sumac being widely used in this way. Chamberlain (6, p. 72) notes that this species was smoked by the Gosiute, and Gilmore (7, p. 100) cites its use by the Indians of the Upper Missouri, but neither writer mentions its being mixed with tobacco. McGuire (14, p. 385) gives Marcy and McClellan (16, p. 102) as his authorities for the following: "Captain Marcy refers to the Comanche being extravagantly fond of smoking tobacco, which they call pah-mo, mixed with the leaves of sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)." West (24, p. 107) accepts this without question and repeats it. In neither the 1853 (15) nor the 1854 (16) edition of Marcy and McClellan are we able, however, to find this complete statement. The passage on Comanche smoking in these volumes (15 and 16, p. 102) is as follows: "All of them [the Comanche] are extravagantly fond of tobacco, which they use for smoking, mixed with the dried leaves of the sumac, inhaling the smoke into their lungs and giving it out through the nostrils." Evidently the Comanche term for tobacco and the name of the particular species of sumac were taken by McGuire from some other source and not from Marcy and McClellan, as is implied. It may be true that *Rhus trilobata* was smoked by the Comanche, but *Rhus glabra* was specified by our informants as the species which was smoked, and medicinal uses only were ascribed to the former. We know of only one other reference to *Rhus trilobata* as a smoking material, that by

LINTON]

THE COMANCHE SUN DANCE

423

his actual war deeds. When the "fort" had been taken, the whole group⁷⁹⁶ returned to camp singing victory songs. This episode symbolized the triumph⁵⁴¹ of the Comanche over their enemies.

On the evening of this day the crier rode through the whole camp calling^[203] on the people to get ready. The members of each band assembled in front⁷⁹⁶ of their tipis and at a given signal all the bands began to move toward the⁷⁰¹ lodge. Each band was marshalled and driven along by its War Whip Bearer. This functionary was chosen for bravery, being presumably the most important warrior in the band. He directed all dances and was allowed to strike any one who refused to dance, or who seemed backward, with his^[411] war whip, a long flat club, notched along one edge. Even to point this club at an individual was enough to bring him into the dance since he would fall ill if he refused.

The various bands moved toward the lodge obliquely, avoiding a direct⁷⁹⁶ approach to the entrance but marching in such a way that they would all⁵³⁵ finally congregate in front of it. As they moved each band did its favorite dance and sang a song of its own. When the first song was finished, the War Whip Bearer called on the band to halt, saying that he had something with which to quench the people's thirst. He then recounted some of his war deeds, assuring the people that they were not true, although they actually were. At the mention of each man whom he had killed the drum was struck. After this coup counting another song would be begun and the people would dance forward again. There were four halts of this sort, the last one finding them in front of the door of the lodge. Here the whole group danced for some time with a slow stamping step. Finally, the camp crier announced that the real dance would begin in the morning, saying that the herd of buffalo had been located by the scout sent out to find them. The people then dispersed.

The dance proper began the following morning with the buffalo round up. Four men, all brave warriors, had been selected to play the part of the buffalo. They were disguised in buffalo robes, one always being that of an old and scabby bull. These men were hidden at some distance from the camp and an especially brave warrior was sent out to find them and drive them in. He carried a bow and arrows in his right hand and a torch in his left, these being the means for killing and cooking the buffalo. The warrior came back driving the buffalo before him and into the lodge. Three of them went in at once, but the old bull ran around the lodge four times before he entered. After this ceremony, which symbolized the bringing of food to the people, the "buffalo" removed their costumes and left the lodge quietly. The same person might act both as a buffalo and as one of the regular

border was still inviting and there the braves could find horses to steal and ranches to plunder; if there must be peace with Texas, there was at least one happy war ground, which according to Comanche ethics, was always a legitimate field of operation. That was Mexico. And hither the young braves would go, notwithstanding the more or less perfunctory efforts of the governments of the United States and Texas to stop them.

War with the Comanches might call forth united tribal effort or it might concern but a small party of warriors, depending on the circumstances. The chief or head man who wished to lead off a war party paraded through the camp, carrying in some cases a long pole with a red flag tipped with eagle's feathers, chanting a war song. If he was a popular leader and the bands was in a war mood, or if he could convince the young braves that his enterprise promised large returns by way of scalps, prisoners and booty, he would soon collect about him many warriors. War dances would be held, the leading men would make talks, runners would be sent to other bands and the expedition would take on large proportions. No warrior was obliged to join, but the young man who always stayed at camp would obviously soon become the object of much ridicule. However, the tribe was not entirely at the mercy of these young hot-spurs. If the expedition was likely to result in the flagrant violation of a popular treaty or if it was calculated to bring down upon the tribe the wrath of a powerful enemy, a more conservative sentiment would prevail and the movement would be nipped in the bud.

In this connection some description of Comanche weapons should be given. Although they acquired a few guns from white traders at a very early date, primitive weapons were all that a great majority of the tribesmen had as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. Their bows were of bois d'arc, rather short for long bows, being ordinarily not more than three feet in length. Sometimes they were wrapped with the sinew of the deer, and the bow string was of the same material. Their arrows were about twenty inches long, of flexible wood, with a triangular spike, or point, of iron. Two feathers intersecting each other at right angles were bound to the other extremity of the arrow and served to guide it. They frequently carried lances, one of which is described as "a piece of

70 *Texas Archaeological and Paleontological Society*

- 41/ steel, about two feet and a half long and an inch wide, tapering to a point, fixed into a slender handle of bois d'arc, the whole weapon being about seven feet in length.

74/ The Comanche shields were described as being circular in form,
41/ about two feet in diameter, and made of wicker work covered with two thicknesses of Buffalo hide. Between the coverings of buffalo hide was a padding of hair about an inch thick. With the advent of the rifle the Indians probably reinforced their shields. At any rate the tough buffalo hide covering, turned flesh side out and polished as much as possible, would turn a rifle ball unless it struck it perpendicular to the surface.

41/ Long after they had become acquainted with metal implements the Comanches continued to use a war club made by binding a withe around a hard stone of about two pounds in weight. A groove around the stone helped to keep it in place. The handle was about fourteen inches long. No doubt the Indians often put this stone to various uses such as driving stakes.

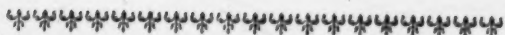
77/ Very little is known about the religion of the wild Comanches.

776 Their religious conceptions were evidently vague and they had comparatively few well established customs of religious meaning. One observer credits them with acknowledging a supreme ruler and director, whom they called the great spirit, and with worshipping the sun as the great cause of life and the earth as the receptacle and producer of all that sustains life.²³ It may well be doubted that they had any conception of a single "Great Spirit," but their veneration for the sun and earth can not be doubted. When game was brought down on a hunt the carcass was immediately prepared and cooked, but no matter how hungry the Indian might be, not a [762] bite was eaten until the chief or leader had cut off a morsel and buried it. Similarly when the chief lit his pipe the first puff of smoke was blown toward the sun and the second to the earth.²⁴

784 Naturally these savages had many taboos. One or two of these may be mentioned as illustrative, for they were sometimes matters of great consequence. In 1787, the Spanish in New Mexico tried a colonization experiment with the Comanches and spent a consider-

23. Parker, Notes Taken with Marcy, 231.

24. See Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State*, 186. Ceremonies preceding the meal similar to this were common among the plains tribes. See Hodge, I, 455.



175 ly alarming as suggested by a report of 1751 which
721 claimed 500 Pueblo Indians and Spanish colonists
648 had been massacred up to that date. When the In-
727 dians numbering several hundred fell on Pecos Pu-
eblo in the summer of this same year, the Spaniards
organized a pursuit force and retaliated by surprising
the Comanches in their camp, killing 101, and tak-
ing the remainder prisoner. Although victories such
175 as this were uncommon, the New Mexican colonists,
721 having realized the gravity of their problems, were
648 more willing to tighten their defenses and join with
protective or punitive expeditions at a moment's
notice.

Unfortunately, the stiffened resistance merely
sharpened the challenge for the Comanche warrior
who thrived on danger. So, far from diminishing,
the Indian offenses against New Mexico continued
to increase in number and severity. In 1774, for ex-
175 ample, almost a thousand warriors devastated the
701 Tewa district north of Santa Fe. If this figure for
[648] their fighting force is accurate, it strongly suggests
[721] that the Comanches, since moving onto the plains
[161] and adapting to horse culture and buffalo hunting,
had experienced something of a population ex-
plosion. At the end of the century, General Pedro
de Nava estimated 2,000 warriors for the Eastern
Comanches and 4,000 for the Western.

175 The Spaniards won minor victories now and then,
648 but by the 1770's the Comanches had acquired fire-
[721] arms in quantity so that they were an even more
[411] formidable enemy. Nevertheless Governor Juan
[728] Bautista de Anza in 1785 succeeded in summoning
a peace council composed of the leading chiefs of

always ride without saddles, and without any other encum-
brance than the waist-cloth to their persons.—This lightness
of apparel gives them a manifest advantage over their Span-
ish adversaries, whose horses are heavily caparisoned, and
whose persons are embarrassed by a cumbrous load of ac-
countrements that partake more of the pomp, than the uses
of war. Light shot guns, javelins, or lances, about 8 feet
long, and bows and arrows compose their weapons. For
defence they wear on the left wrist, a shield made of Buf-
faloes hide, consolidated when green by a process in which
fire is the principal agent. They are made in an oval or
circular form, about two feet in diameter, and presenting a
surface slightly convexed. They are exceedingly tough,
quite impenetrable to an arrow, and often so to the ball of
a scopete; and they are light and easily disengaged from the
arm in case of emergency. The loss of a shield does not
attach an inexpressible disgrace to the character of a Co-
manchee warrior. They are comparatively novices in the
use of fire-arms, and have an insuperable aversion to the
weight of Rifles, but employ the bow and lance with great
dexterity, and to a dispersed and retreating enemy, with
destructive effect. The known capacity of their horses, and
their minute acquaintance with the invaded country, which
enables them generally to surprise the indolent and inert
Spaniards, concurring with the miserable condition of the
provinces for defense, inspire them with an artificial fear-
lessness, which invests them in the view of their ignorant
and spiritless enemies, with the hideous horrors of the
basilisk. But in truth, these horrors are imaginary: oppose
them with decision and energy, and they will crouch like
the Spaniel, or fly like the "stricken fawn."—They usually
make what they term their grand campaign, once a year,
either in the spring or fall season, when the three bands
unite and co-operate in plundering and devastating the de-
fenceless provinces that are contiguous to the Rio Grande.
Besides these periodical invasions, the preparations for
which, bear some resemblance to the pomp and circum-
stance of war, and the issues are frequently most disastrous
to the exposed Provincials; there is a continual egress and

[Ca. 1818]

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[ca 1870]

222 Mountains. But these collections form a very small part of the food neces-
[462] sary to sustain life.

224 The animals killed in the chase are skinned, cut up, and brought to
462 camp by the women, who follow the hunters for that purpose. The whole
262 of the carcass is utilized. The entrails are regarded as appetizing morsels.
[263] They rarely use any condiment with their meat. When brought home, the
[462] women kindle fires and proceed to partly roast the choice pieces for their
lords. The poorest pieces of flesh they may be permitted to reserve for
themselves.

411 The Comanches are expert horsemen and skillful archers. The iron-
tipped arrow impelled from a Comanche's *bois d'arc* bow, is a dangerous
missile. They easily send it through an inch board; and I have seen the
rib of an old bullock shattered by one of those arrows.

462 Among them, the women are the most abject slaves. The men do nothing,
562 except to follow the chase, go on the war-path, or decorate themselves with
feathers and paint. Even this last operation conducive to manly vanity,
sometimes falls to the task of the female slaves of the lodge. The slaugh-
tered animals on the plains are brought in by them; the skins are dressed
by women, fuel is collected; the herds of ponies are watched; plumes are
made, the paint bags are kept in order; the tents or lodges are erected;
food is prepared; and, if after performing all these services the Comanche
lady finds time heavy on her hands, she is made to minister to the pleasure
of her sovereign lord by adorning his buckakin leggings with delicate
splotches of paint, and graceful tufts of feather plucked from the prairie
eagle; to streak his face with vermillion, yellow ochre, and charcoal, until
he appears in all the glory of a full fledged dandy, and then he saunters
forth to exhibit his charms to the susceptible maidens of his tribe. The
562 wife, or the daughter, must, at least apparently, be delighted at the magni-
593 ficient "make up" of the dandy husband or father. Theirs is not the privi-
lege to complain.

Among the Comanches, all women occupy the position of slaves. The
daughter is the slave to the father; the wife to the husband, and if there
are any who do not occupy the relationship of daughter or wife, they are
593 slaves to some male relative, or to the tribe. The father sells his daughter
583 in marriage, and the husband may sell his wife for a pony, a shining piece
of silver, or a handful of beads.

562 The women can form no ties, make no bargain, and exercise no choice
in social or domestic relations. The father selects a husband for his daugh-
583 ter, exacts a consideration, if she proves agreeable to the chosen son-in-law,
593 and consigns her to him, to do with her as he will. She becomes his slave,

MIGRATIONS • 7

another bunch went back into Texas somewhere and they all went separate there. And now these, I forgot what their name is . . . way up in southwest of California, I think. Well, they talk like us. I don't know their white man name but us Indians call them *akai*. That has meaning of "red Comanches." That's what their name is. Then over there in Utah there's a bunch talk like us, and they talk easy, slow, say every word like us Comanches. They call us word means something like "they come from hot country." You know, some folks tell you that Comanches come from Mexico, but it ain't true. Comanches been here and there but they come from up north somewhere. My folks, as far as they can remember, come from Colorado near Denver somewhere, but it wasn't no Denver in them days. The army run my folks and their folks in Oklahoma, but we didn't belong here way back. We from Colorado. That's where my father's father was killed by them Utes. I still know that country from what the old people told me and what I ask them. 173

Migrations

In the late 1600s the Comanches began to migrate southward into contact with the Spanish settlements of New Spain and east onto the Plains. The Comanches most likely moved south to be nearer a source of horses, which they first acquired raiding with the Utes in northern New Mexico. The first large group of Comanches appeared in the New Mexico area around 1705. In the succeeding ten or fifteen years, with the Utes, they were constant sources of harassment to the Spanish settlements in the area. In approximately 1726, the Comanches, perhaps feeling their new power with the acquisition of the horse, turned on their former allies, the Utes. Many of the war stories told by Sanapia and some of my older Comanche informants tell of horse-raiding expeditions against the Utes. 167
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In the early eighteenth century the Comanches began to expand to a greater degree onto the Plains. The contraction of the pedestrian Dismal River culture in the central Plains around 1725 is attributed by some authors to the energized predatory equestrian Comanche people. By the middle of the eighteenth century the Comanches had established themselves as a real threat to the Spanish settlements in New Mexico. At first, however, the Spanish policy toward the Comanches was relatively long-suffering because the existence of the mounted and war-like Comanches acted as a protective barrier on New Spain's eastern frontiers against intrusion from that direction by large numbers of French and English. During this period, however, the Comanches made treaties with certain tribes to the north who were sympathetic to the French, and thus French traders began to supply the Comanches with firearms, a trade item which the Spanish had always feared to release to the Comanches. In the late eighteenth century the dangerous situation provoked by the Comanche's acquisition of guns stimulated the Spanish to send military forces against the Comanches, whose center at that time was in southeastern Colorado. In approximately 1790 the northern Comanche bands, perhaps responding to the military pressures imposed by the Spanish, made an alliance with the Kiowa, an alliance which was never broken. 167
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In 1820 Major Long encountered a large camp of Comanches on the upper great bend of the Arkansas River. Prior to this time the Comanches had little 177
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57 Ca-vo-yo, who was one of the first of the old chaps to become an individual to me, was such a friendly, kindly old fellow that it was hard for me to picture him riding into battle, screaming his war cry. But by the agency's record he must have been a successful and respected warrior for approximately twenty years. Had he not been a successful warrior, none would have sought him out to name their man-child and give of his medicine.

718 I have tried a number of times to write Ca-vo-yo's story as a giver of names, but the trouble always is that scarcely have you begun to write about the giving of a name, when you run into *Pa-haw-cut*, the Comanche name for medicine. And it is hard to tell a white audience about Comanche medicine, because the white man has nothing through which he can identify with the Comanche's feeling about it. I thought at one time of creating a straw man by combining an individual who by faith had a guardian angel with one who believed his destiny was directed by the stars and their positions, and then to this composite individual adding one who believed in luck—one who would not leave his home for the office of a morning without his good luck charm. Then I decided that the faith of even such an individual would still fall far short of a Comanche's faith in his medicine.

555 When a Comanche warrior was bragging to an audience gathered around a campfire, of some mighty coup he had brought about, he was not bragging of a personal exploit—he was telling about the strength of his medicine. From the earliest war games he played as a boy, throughout his active adult life, he was constantly training himself to be ever a better warrior. It was his way of life. Also, he sought to perfect himself in the making of arms, both for war and for the hunt. Each warrior furnished his own arms. We have a written history, more or less, for the last 175 years of Comanche warfare, which shows that the Comanche possessed neither an armory nor a commissary.

492 Just as he had one set of arrows for war and another set of arrows he used in the killing of the buffalo, so the Comanche had horses trained for war and horses trained to carry him alongside the buffalo, so he could loose an arrow into the rib cage of his huge quarry. But it was his individual *Pa-haw-cut*, or medicine, that allowed him to count coup early and often in the battle—that caused his horse to carry him at full speed into battle and to carry him away in a strategic retreat. The same medicine allowed his horse to place him beside



FIGURE 18. Weapons and equipment captured from a Comanche war party that raided Corpus Christi, Texas, in June 1864. Sketch by William Bellart.

34: Ewers E-4 (no date) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

● 411



FIGURES 24-25. Comanche quivers. (USNM 1474 and 4433.)

174 tremities. The arms are bent at the elbows and end in three-fingered hands. The straight legs are turned up at their extremities to form feet. 714
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In its rudimentary simplicity the style of human figure represented by this Comanche artist resembles some of the human figures pictured on exposed rock surfaces and in caves of Texas as recorded by archeologists. A. T. Jackson has expressed the opinion that "a few of the historic paintings in West-Central Texas, and perhaps elsewhere, may have been made by the Comanches."⁶ The styles of human and animal figures appearing on these three shields are essentially as primitive as are the paintings on rock surfaces and evidence no influence from the white man's artistic traditions. 532
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Black and yellow are the colors most prominently used in these shield paintings. In 1837 Noah Smithwick observed that the Comanche regarded a yellow substance, resembling ochre, as having "power to turn aside any missile which might be directed against a body on which it had been rubbed."⁷ The shield paintings were essentially protective designs. 531
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Comanche
Quivers
Figures
24-25

Two Comanche quivers in the Berlandier collection are pictured in Figures 24 and 25. The first (Figure 24) is of horsehide, 69 cm. long, and decorated with a cut fringe at the back, as well as at the ends of the 5.5 cm. wide rawhide shoulder strap. The second quiver is longer (75 cm.), of horse or deerhide, with a rear extension of buffalo hide, hair inside, about 9 cm. in length. Its rawhide shoulder sling is but 3 cm. wide. Each quiver is fitted with bent wooden spacers which prevent the case from twisting or bending out of shape. Unlike the Comanche specimen illustrated by Bollaert (Figure 18, top center), these quivers are not combined with bow cases. Nor are they made of white wolf hide, which Berlandier learned the Comanche preferred for protecting their weapons because of the strong supernatural powers they attributed to the white wolf.⁸ 411
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Comanche
Powder Horn
Figure 26

Powder horns pictured by Lino Sánchez y Tapia as carried by Lipan Comanche, Tonkawa, Tawehash, Kickapoo, Koasati, and Karankawa Indians are a dark color, suggesting that they were of buffalo horn.⁹ A Comanche powder horn from the Berlandier collection (Figure 26), however, is of domesticated cattle, large numbers of which had reverted to the wild state in Texas before the 1830s. This piece measures 8 cm. in diameter at the base and 2 cm. at the tip. A wooden plug, painted red, has been inserted in the base. Presumably a smaller wooden plug was placed in the tip end to prevent powder from falling out. The horn is decorated 415
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6. Jackson, 1958, p. 465. The same source illustrates a wide variety of conventionalized human figures occurring in pictographs at Texas sites (plates CCLII-CCLXIX), as well as the representation of a buffalo horn headdress painted on the shield of Comanche Jack, which was used by him in raids into Texas prior to 1880 (plate CCXLIII). 714

7. Smithwick, 1920, p. 191.

8. Berlandier, 1841, p. 186.

9. See Plates 1-6, 11, 14, and 15.